

## SEA-SERVICE PAY OF PURSERS IN THE NAVY.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 2.]

MARCH 29, 1860.

Mr. MORSE, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, made the following

### REPORT.

*The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred House bill No. 2, for the modification of the sea-service pay of pursers in the navy, have had the same under consideration, and report:*

That by the law of 1842, and now in force, the sea pay of pursers was made to depend on the rate of the vessel to which they should be attached, and was fixed at the following sums:

For ships-of-the-line.....	\$3,500
For frigates or razees.....	3,000
For sloops-of-war and first class steamers.....	2,000
For brigs and schooners.....	1,500
For steamers less than first class.....	1,500

When these rates of pay were established the United States had no steamers of more than sixteen hundred tons burden, and only three of any size in the service, and these were side-wheel steamers. Our line-of-battle ships, frigates, and sloops-of-war, with only two exceptions, were sailing vessels, and each class was frequently at sea. Since 1842 the character of our navy has undergone a radical change. Steam vessels, for all branches of the service, have been introduced, and will continue to be introduced, until vessels propelled by wind merely will be but rarely, if at all, seen on active duty.

By this change a class of war steamers has been introduced into the service and rated as frigates, of much larger size than the old line-of-battle ship, and another class, rated as sloops-of-war, of greater tonnage than the old sailing frigate. The duty of pursers on board these two classes of vessels is quite as responsible and laborious as that formerly performed on line-of-battle ships and frigates, though by differently rating the steam-vessels the pay of the pursers serving on them is greatly reduced. Under the present system the sea pay of a purser is liable to continual change as he passes from one vessel to another, for it is never the same when the vessels are of different rate. A young and untried officer may, and often does, through political influence or favoritism, secure a place on board a frigate with \$3,000 per annum, while an old and long-tried officer may be kept, by simi-

lar influences, on a second class steamer, brig, or schooner, at one-half this sum, the lowest grade of pay. There are seven old pursers, the youngest of whom has been twenty-three years in the service, now doing duty on foreign stations on sloops-of-war for the third and next to the lowest grade of sea-service pay, and which is only \$200 more than the leave-of-absence pay allowed the same officers; and on their return may, under the law, be ordered to brigs, schooners, or store-ships, on the lowest grade of pay, \$300 less than leave-of-absence pay. This fact shows clearly the great injustice of the law as it now stands, and the marked inconsistency of some of its provisions. This continual vascillation from one extreme to the other makes it impossible for officers of this class to make any certain pecuniary calculations for the future, based on the compensation they are to receive.

As the class and character of the vessels upon which the compensation of pursers was made to depend have been so greatly changed since the passage of the law of 1842, a change of the basis upon which their pay was regulated seems to be actually necessary to meet and conform to the changed condition of the service. If the rate of vessels was even a just rule by which to regulate the pay of a class of officers before the introduction of steam power into the navy, and when all could easily agree on the rate each vessel should take, its justice and symmetry have been set aside by the general disuse of the class of vessels which formed the foundation upon which the system of compensation was made to rest.

To meet the difficulty and to provide a remedy, therefore, your committee recommend that length of service instead of size or rate of vessels be hereafter made the principle upon which the pay of this class of officers shall be established. This principle of length of service and tried experience is the one now regulating the compensation of both army and navy officers, with this single exception, and your committee see no reason why a rule so just and expedient should not be applied to pursers in the naval service as well as to other officers in the same service. The proposed change will create no additional expense to the government. The amendment which your committee propose and recommend has been so drawn as to keep the gross sum to be annually paid to pursers under it a little below the annual average sum paid the same officers for the last seven years, from 1853 to 1859, inclusive, under the laws now regulating their pay. This will clearly appear by an examination of the following statement sent the committee by Mr. A. J. O'Bannon, Fourth Auditor of the Treasury, in answer to the mode of payment submitted to him by your committee for examination, with a request that he would compare it with the annual average payment to pursers on sea duty for the last seven years, and report to your committee the result of such examination. The following is the Fourth Auditor's reply:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
*Fourth Auditor's Office, March 26, 1860.*

SIR: Agreeably to the request contained in your letter of the 23d instant, I have the honor to state that the accounts filed in this office of all the pursers in the United States navy who were on sea duty on

the 1st day of January in each year, from 1853 to 1859, inclusive, show their aggregate pay for the seven years to have been \$491,500, and their average annual pay to have been \$70,214 28.

Taking this as a guide, and adopting as the lowest rate of sea pay \$1,800 per annum for the first five years, to be increased every succeeding five years until the pay reaches \$3,000 per annum for all who have served twenty years and more, the following gradation would give about the aggregate of the pay received by the pursers who were on sea duty for the seven years referred to, thus: First five years, \$1,800; second five years, \$2,250; third five years, \$2,600; fourth five years, \$2,825; after twenty years, \$3,000.

Upon this basis the aggregate pay of the same pursers on sea duty for the seven years would have been \$491,350, \$150 less than it was under existing laws.

In conclusion, I would most respectfully add that, by adopting the basis above indicated, I am of opinion that there would be no increase in the pay of pursers, but it would probably result in a decrease of the aggregate pay in a series of say from five to ten years.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
A. J. O'BANNON,

*Fourth Auditor.*

Hon. F. H. MORSE,

*Chairman of Naval Committee, House of Representatives.*

The gross amount paid for salaries of pursers on sea duty during the last seven years was \$491,500; *annual* average sum paid the same officers, \$70,214 28; the aggregate sum which would have been paid to the same officers when on sea duty for seven years under the proposed amendment is \$491,350; making the annual average pay to all the pursers on sea duty under the proposed bill \$70,192 85, \$21 43 less than the annual average pay for the last seven years.

Your committee recommend striking out all after the enacting clause in the bill referred to them, and inserting the accompanying amendment, and passing the bill as amended.

